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TALENT-KEYHOLE

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VII. THE INFORMATION EXPLOSION

1. The Long Range Plan of 1965 is based on the unquestioned assumption that CIA "must be allowed to grow to meet ever increasing demands from the Government for intelligence on a world that becomes constantly more complex." This proposition is repeated in a dozen ways which all add up to endorsement of the belief that the more facts we collect the better we do our job of safeguarding American security. It could be distilled into an Orwellian slogan: MORE IS BETTER.

2. We have first to recognize that a bias in favor of amassing indefinitely expanding quantities of information characterizes American society far more than any other that ever existed. We are hypnotized by statistics of every conceivable degree of trustworthiness, relevance, and importance. Nowhere outside America is there so great a tyranny of information over all the other factors affecting judgment--the tyranny of the public opinion poll, market research, television ratings. Never mind aberrations like the election of 1948 and the Edsel automobile; these merely prove that what we needed was more facts.

3. Given its brief, intense history, it was inevitable that the intelligence community would embody this American bias in its most extreme form. In particular, two important factors have intensified our search for more and more facts. One is the course of events during the decade after World War II, in which our ignorance of many fundamental foreign problems encouraged a kind of national paranoia that persists into the present. The other is the way in which the two dominant segments of the intelligence community--the military and the academic--reinforce each other's lifelong practice of treating the amassing of information as more important than theory, speculation, or hard-thought analysis. Thus MORE IS BETTER has been an article of faith with us from the beginning.

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as well as analysis; the people who produce finished intelligence probably

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make up less than 2%.* The disparity is much less pronounced within CIA, but even so its Directorate of Intelligence allocates fewer than 30% of its professional and clerical slots to those functions which can be described as production of finished intelligence; exactly the same percentage goes to
25X1A1a [redacted] and the remainder to collection, processing, and executive direction.

5. In our view the assumption that MORE IS BETTER is now a dangerous anachronism, and ought to receive the community's most rigorous and skeptical analysis. The reason is the Information Explosion. The Long Range Plan of 1965 correctly says: "It is abundantly clear at this time that our ability to process and analyze raw information has not kept pace with our collection capability." The Plan alludes to needs for increases in CIA personnel which add up to [redacted] slots over the next five years, and include [redacted] alone. It points out that these figures require further study, but the implication that an increase of this magnitude would enable CIA to use properly what is now being collected impresses us as unduly optimistic.
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6. At the same time the community goes on making plans for ever larger explosions. A current study of one single aspect of the intelligence function--early warning--holds out the hope, or threat, of the following expansions of our ability to acquire raw data:

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* These figures are drawn from the calculations of [redacted] and describe the size and shape of the community in 1965. They can be only rough approximations because of widely varying terminology and other obstacles to statistical exactitude.

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7. It is clear that these and other developments can produce better information on some specific problems than we now have, and the need for this is not questioned. The bone of contention is quantity, and the problem whether we can control it in such a way as to recognize and isolate and correctly interpret (particularly with respect to enemy intentions) the crucial items these systems would provide. The community's record with respect to the exploitation of current collection inspires anxiety that we are creating worse problems than we are solving; not merely of finding the manpower to read out the new information, in itself a great problem no matter how much we automate, but of developing the judgment and discrimination to sift out the crucial facts and assess them correctly. Automation and other technical improvements will bring the handling of data under progressively better control (as to quantity) at the working levels of the intelligence process, but the total product of these and other quantum-jump systems can only increase the work load of policy-makers from the President down who are already overworked. We must move quickly to bring that product under control.

8. After several pages of describing future prospects for quantum jumps in collection, the study just cited has only this to say about their effects on analysis, estimative judgments, and determination of policy on the basis of the information collected:

"One clear conclusion is inescapable: the investments in sensor and vehicle development will require comparable investments in means of exploitation and analysis. The technical revolution in information collection, epitomized

* Citations and quotations are from the third draft of the study on early warning.

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

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by the reconnaissance field, is only just beginning to be felt. Its full impact promises to be enormous and may be expensive, but the great volumes of information we are learning to collect must be dealt with or wasted. Nowhere will this problem be sharper

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Here is the Sorcerer's Apprentice commanding more and more broomsticks to haul more and more water--in real time.

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10. The passage quoted above says that the technical revolution in information collection is only just beginning to be felt. It is our conviction, and the source of our anxiety, that the Information Explosion has been with us for years and that our patchwork efforts to cope with it have concealed the true disparity between collection and end use. The community already holds warehouses full of unexploited SIGINT tapes and miles of photographic film only superficially examined, though both are known to contain useful

TOP SECRET

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information on our two top targets. But the explosion is by no means confined to overhead reconnaissance and accumulation of signals. The explosion in written communications was under way long before we were born; it is tempting to date bureaucracy's affinity for it from the Franco-Prussian War, when during the siege of Paris a Frenchman escaped to Tours by balloon and

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"...set up the first microphotography unit ever to be employed in war. Government dispatches in Tours were reduced to a minute size, printed on feathery collodion membranes, then rolled into a pellicle; so that one pigeon could carry up to 40,000 dispatches.... On reaching Paris, the dispatches were projected by magic lantern and transcribed by a battery of clerks. Sometimes one pigeon-load alone would require a whole week to decipher and distribute."*

11. Even during World War II Winston Churchill complained repeatedly, and in vain, that the Information Explosion--i.e., the quantity of cable traffic--had become an intolerable burden and sometimes even a positive hindrance to prosecution of the war.** Later we ourselves used to try to keep down the volume to save money, but Churchill's objection

* Alistair Horne, The Fall of Paris, New York, 1965, P. 128.

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** For example, a memorandum to the Foreign Secretary, "I feel that this is an evil which ought to be checked. Ministers and Ambassadors abroad seem to think that the bigger the volume of their reports home, the better is their task discharged. I try to read all these telegrams, and I think the volume grows from day to day." (The Second World War, III, 723.) To General Ismay and others: "I see no need for these

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long and pointless telegrams, and it is becoming quite impossible to conduct military operations when everything has to be spread about the Departments and around the world like this." (Ibid., p. 724.) And again to the Foreign Secretary: "The telegrams seem to be growing longer and longer....I quite understand they all want to help the war by increasing their output. In fact, they clog and hamper." (Ibid., IV, 864.)

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TOP SECRET

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was more to the point: The greatest cost of our cable traffic is the time it takes thousands of people to keep abreast of it. Yet in response to perpetual demand for more and quicker communication, impressive technical advances have brought this increase in the cable traffic processed by CIA Headquarters Signal Center over the years:

1950

1955

1960

1965

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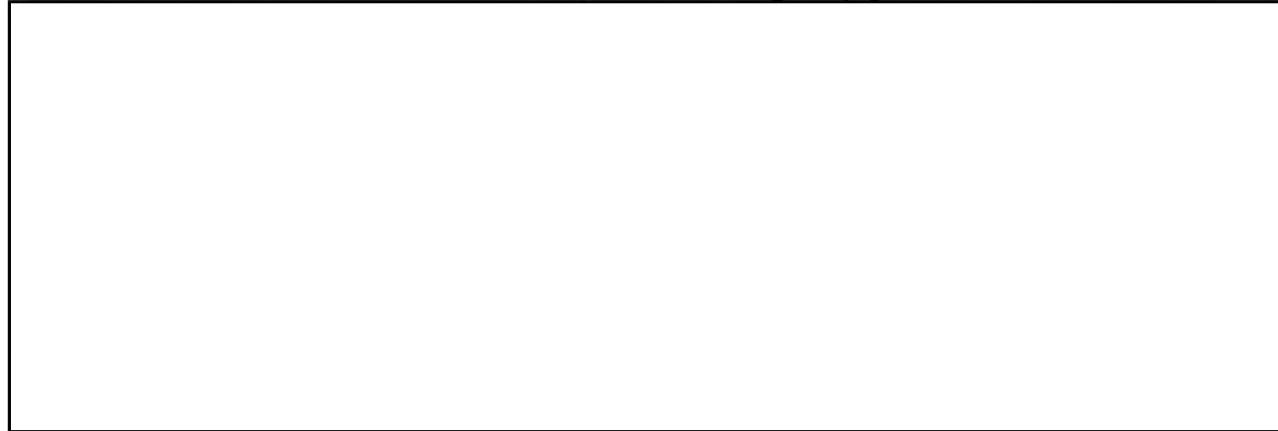


12. In this context the phrase "Information Explosion" has little to do with exploitable raw intelligence data, because the number of published CS reports has changed remarkably little over the years and in 1965 amounted to some [redacted]. But it has everything to do with the way intelligence officers at all levels spend their time, hours which cannot be expanded with the expansion of reading matter. Some of this increase in Commo capabilities must have improved the quality and speed of our reporting and that of other agencies, and in particular improved the responsiveness of our operations; much of the time spent working on [redacted] cables at both ends must formerly have been spent on pouched dispatches. But we doubt that these changes explain the [redacted] expansion of the system.

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13. The greatest jump in our cable traffic, almost [redacted] from 1960 to 1965, illustrates how a system, developed to meet some important need, acquires a life of its own whether the urgency persists or not. For



* "Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion." Parkinson illustrated his discovery by some statistics drawn from the British Navy and Colonial Office. Between 1914 and 1928 the Admiralty
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TOP SECRET

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14. And now our Cable Secretariat, the National Military Command Center, and others are looking for ways to cope with what the early-warning study calls

"...the sizeable increases expected in both message volumes and numbers of electrical transmissions over the next few years--perhaps as much as 8 to 10% a year. They are also experimenting with remote print-out of the messages at the analysts' locations and with electronic storage for extended periods and retrieval by cathode ray tube display as well as hard copy. As communications centers expand in capacity, message handling down the line to the analyst will come under heavy pressure to go automatic too."

But the capacity of each recipient of all those cables will remain exactly what it was before: what he can read and absorb and act on in a day. Unless, of course, he has to spend more time looking at pictures. The total capacity of all recipients together has theoretically increased by some of the few percentage points which reflect CIA personnel increases (outside NPIC) since 1950, but any effort to prove this would have to take into account the facts that cables go to many more readers than the pouches used to, that we must read increasing numbers of State and Defense cables in addition to our own, and that cables must compete increasingly with the products of other compilations of material.

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bureaucracy grew 78.45% while the number of capital ships in commission declined by 67.74% and the number of officers and men declined by 31.5%. Between 1935 and 1954, while Great Britain was losing most of the colonies it had accumulated over the past two centuries, the Colonial Office grew from 372 bodies to 1661. It should be emphasized that the parallel suggested here reflects not upon Commo but upon the work habits of its users. Something of the same point could be made with respect to the way we sought out things for the U-2 to do after May 1960, when it was no longer usable to meet the urgent need for which it had been created.

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15. The effect of overhead reconnaissance on the collective work load is impossible to measure, so that more attention is naturally paid to backlogs and shortages of manpower in NPIC than to the ability of the substantive producers to use the NPIC product adequately. We can only concur in a recent general description of the problem which points out that the explosion affects the processors, producers, and consumers of photographic intelligence and cites these reasons:

"...the increased use of our ever-improving reconnaissance capabilities, and increased dependency on photography as other sources of intelligence become relatively less productive, and a general widening of interests into areas previously neglected or ignored by intelligence."*
(Emphasis added.)

In consequence,

"Volumes currently processed are many times the 1960 volumes. For example, during fiscal year 1965 an excess of two million feet of film
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17. We are now receiving open literature at the rate of 1,600,000 items a year (114,500 copies of books, 270,600 of journals, and the remainder of newspapers). "This a threefold increase over 1950. By 1970 the figure will be two million." In the fields of science and technology and "sociology," the figure rose from 16,000 individual titles in 1950 to 46,000 in 1966. According to the Foreign Documents

* Quotations and most statistics in paragraphs 15-24 are from Paul Borel's Controlling Intelligence Information, written for presentation to the [redacted] in September 1966.
The opinions based on them here are far more pessimistic than Borel's.

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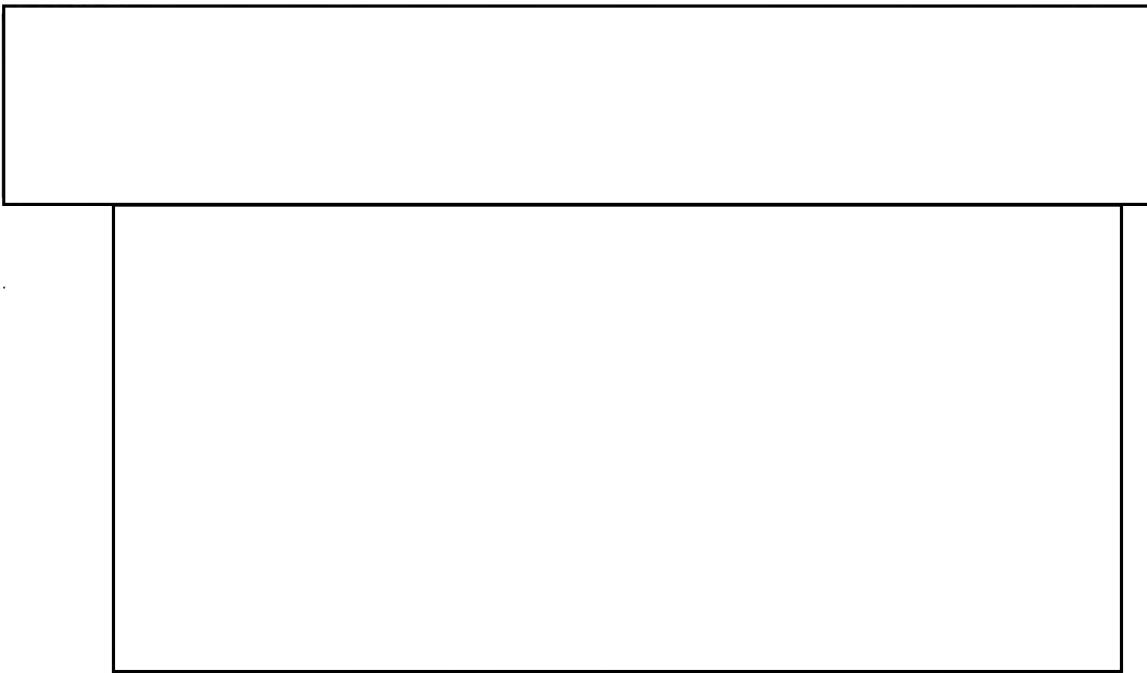
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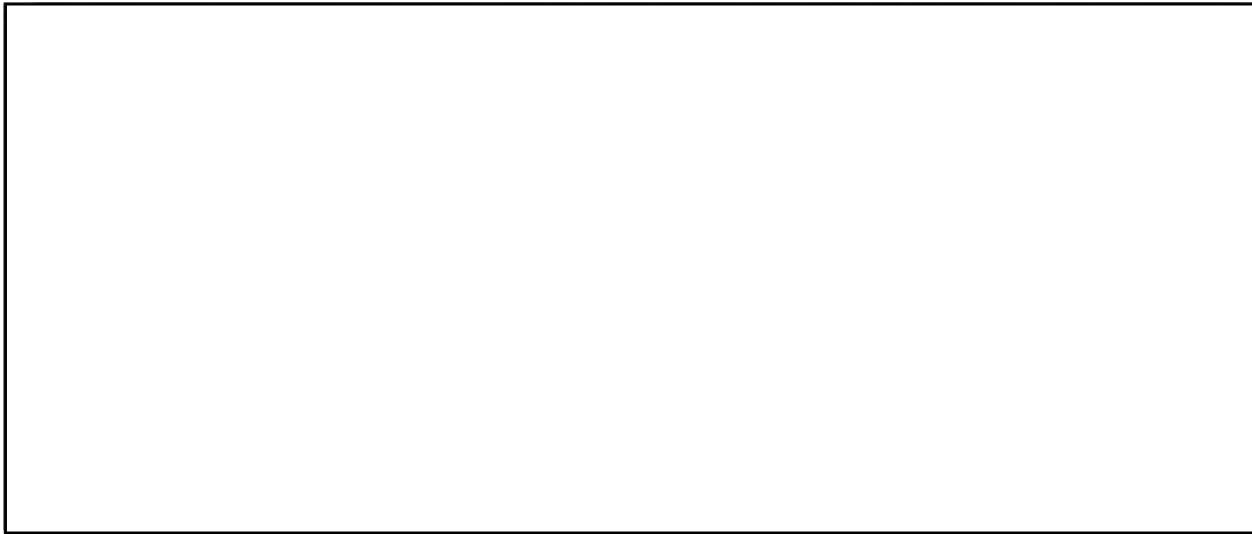
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Or in other words, we are looking for ways to speed up the flood we must be shielded from. Meanwhile the USIB Committee on Documentation is working on a scheme to acquire a quantity of open literature from the Soviet Union, in return for three sets of U.S. patents. This would include not only a number of serial publications and monographs, but copies of all Soviet candidate doctoral dissertations--in triplicate.

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19. Even so, CIA has been working on schemes to increase the quantity of such material many times. One project, which still has bugs

TOP SECRET

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TOP SECRET

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in it, will some day make it possible for the processing of overt materials from publications and broadcasts to be limited only by the speed with which translators can dictate their translations onto tapes, because other stages ending with computer printout will be automated. If automatic machine translation ever becomes practicable, our ability to process overt foreign information--i.e., put it on paper in English--will jump from millions of words per day to hundreds of millions. If we apply analogous techniques to "exploiting" all foreign television, a medium we shall have to take steadily more into account, we shall create the opportunity for another quantum jump. By that time, for any evidence we can see to the contrary, new projects for enormous expansion of technical collection of information of all kinds will have required more and more warehouses for the storage of more and more miles of tapes and films.

20. Meanwhile, Borel says "our total receipts of raw and finished intelligence documents have shown little variation over the years. The high water mark was reached in 1963 with a receipt figure of 409,400 individual documents." Two factors make this high figure weigh especially heavily in the collective work load. One is the special way these documents compete with each other and with all unclassified material for attention. Analysts must not only read as much raw information as possible but must also read one another's finished products. It can be argued indeed that they are one another's best customers, rather than the policy-makers who cannot conceivably keep up with the flow. And the other factor, obviously related to the first, is the way the number of copies of our classified documents keeps growing. Cables are often published in from 35 to 50 copies, sometimes in more than 100, and many of these copies are circulated to dozens or scores of readers. In addition, the prevalence of office copying-machines "has encouraged secondary reproduction by recipient offices to absurd proportions"--not just of cables, and no matter what security restraints we put on this practice.

21. The most vivid illustration of all this proliferation is afforded by the Office of Current Intelligence. With almost the same number of authorized personnel as in 1955, OCI in 1965 succeeded in handling more than twice as many incoming items, and in producing 2-1/2 times as many of its own. But the total effect on all its customers' IN-boxes together was much greater: Measured in "impressions" (number of pages x number of copies per page), OCI annual production jumped in those ten years more than 400%, from 7,000,000 to 36,000,000. Much of this flow is accounted for by publishing the OCI Weekly Summary, which averages 28 pages in a press run of 1570 copies of the Secret version and of 545 copies of the code-word version called Weekly Review. OCI Special Reports go to 1646

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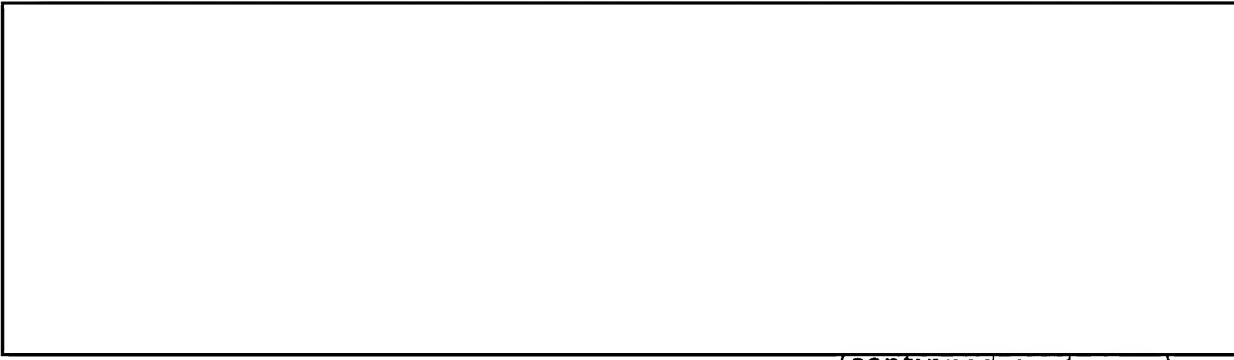
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of the recipients of these two weeklies; thus, on 28 October 1966, a productivity of 16,460 impressions was achieved by an essay, ten pages long counting the cover and a full-page map, which was entitled "Trends in the Lesser Antilles."*

22. Whatever the eventual benefits of automation, it is bound to increase the need for discipline. So far, in some ways, it has made the problem worse: "We see instances where basic input data is replicated, reformatted, resorted, to the point where the output volume exceeds input by perhaps 100 times." This is an excess which experience will no doubt correct. Yet in all that we have heard of the prospects for automating the intelligence community, there is still overwhelming emphasis on quantity and speed and far too little on the more important factors of quality and relevance.**

* After pages of travelogue ("St. Lucia...in 1962 opened its first luxury beach hotel"), this report delivers the message that the mayor of a town in Martinique was a Communist until the late 1940s, the mayor of a town in Guadeloupe still is, and in certain unlikely circumstances the Communists might reverse the steady decline they have been undergoing for nearly 20 years. We are informed that this and two other recent Special Reports were published because the DCI had told OCI to keep an eye on the West Indies. But we would argue that there is an important difference between keeping track of a subject and publishing a pointless essay in many hundreds of copies.

OCI publications are not usually so pointless. But managers throughout CIA justify a good many such pieces of research and publication on the ground that they keep up the analyst's morale, especially if his area is quiet and dull. The same excuse is given by the Clandestine Services for publishing raw reports known to be of marginal value or none. We consider this excuse unworthy of a serious effort to produce good national intelligence, and an important cause of the Information Explosion.


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TOP SECRET

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23. This defect cannot be remedied by the automators; they are in any case so devoted to hardware that they have invented a subtle denigration, probably unintentional, of the programming (and by extension the thought that precedes programming) which determines the use to which the hardware will be put. In their jargon this is software. The remedy will have to be supplied by management: a workable definition of the function of U.S. intelligence.*

24. Otherwise automation will accomplish the instant retrieval of everything, no matter what, and infinite permutations of googols of binary bits, no matter how trivial. One of the many functions of [redacted] will be to "search the literature" and produce all the books, documents, reports, etc., on a given subject. What does the analyst do when the truckload is delivered at the door? Or when it is automated into another truckload of electronic printout? That is his worry. Some electronics people obscure this crucial limitation upon the system with another jargon phrase, "individual channel capacity," and change the subject. Yet there is no

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* Our views on this point are influenced by the development of [redacted] for the Clandestine Services years ago. It became clear that great technological advances in storage and retrieval would have done more harm than good if we had not first insisted upon drastically higher standards for what was to be stored and retrieved. Automation therefore began with a new and more rigorous definition of the purposes the information was to serve, a severe purge of accumulated irrelevancies, and a program of education and regulation throughout the Clandestine Services designed to acquaint all users of information both with the advantages of automation and with the necessity for self-discipline which these advantages imposed. The problem the whole community now faces of what to automate is many times more difficult than the one attacked by [redacted], because it means redefining the function of U.S. intelligence altogether, and the need for rigorous standards of quality and relevance is correspondingly greater.

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VII - 12

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doubt that if its function is properly defined, automation can accomplish many more marvels of the kind which caused a Soviet planning official to say that CIA understood the Soviet economy better than the Soviet government did. The biggest problem is managerial "software."

25. Given all these grisly statistics we would go far beyond Borel's comment: "All in all a significant part of the information problem is of our own creation." He draws this conclusion only with respect to our manufacture and distribution of classified documents, themselves only a fraction of the "20 thousand individual series, in ten million issues, published in 150 million copies," which a survey of information inventories and flows estimated that the community produces or handles every year. In our view this problem is almost entirely of the community's own creation, not imposed from outside, and is a product of the way it has allowed its own "requirements," both for collection and for production, to proliferate unchecked. There would be a rough justice in blaming the analysts for their own plight, because collectively they have stated requirements for everything under the sun. But it is more to the point to emphasize that management has allowed this to happen.

26. We believe that the sum total of all our requirements, and the Information Explosion they have caused to be created, are severely detrimental to the American intelligence effort. In the long run it is not the crude question of work load which matters most, nor even the point that each item uses up customers' time and attention which cannot be given to any other item, so that each of our products must receive steadily less. What matters most is the question whether this quantity of information is degrading the quality of all our work. It is the earnest conviction of those of us who have studied CIA's requirements systems as a whole, and thought of their effect on our work, that this is already happening, and can only grow worse with each large new accretion. It is impossible to prove or disprove this thesis, least of all by our customary reliance on statistics. It has probably applied least where in the past it has mattered most--for example, the community could hardly have given more intense attention to Soviet military capabilities. But in many other important matters we believe that the community's attention is becoming steadily more superficial: that we cannot apply to the available information the depth of analysis it requires for accurate judgments. In addition to those we have suggested elsewhere, we offer these further indications, of course debatable but worth considering:

- a. The quantity of information on the Sino-Soviet dispute, especially of official statements from both sides published by

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TOP SECRET

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[redacted] reinforces our geographically discrete, highly compartmented approach to understanding it. The Sinologues have no time to master to their own satisfaction the wealth of information from the Chinese side, including all that comes out in the 46,000-word volume [redacted]

25X1A8a and the Sovietologists are equally swamped in the flood of broadcast and other information on the USSR, and it is far beyond the capacity of either to study in depth the behavior of the two governments together. One solution is hiring more people, since we are especially short of Chinese experts. Another is transferring people away from attention to problems like "any indications, however indirect, of Somali involvement in Eritrean dissidence" (an IPC target), and onto important matters. But surely the quickest practical change would be even greater selectivity as to what we read and publish. The Sino-Soviet dispute has developed so slowly, with such infinite repetition of arguments, that we would be better occupied studying its underlying causes than in looking for Byzantine subtleties in the latest several thousand words of diatribe. Our compartmented, current-events approach kept many people from even acknowledging the seriousness of the dispute until it had been going on for several years. Of course somebody must skim and screen as much as possible, but our current handling of available reading matter makes skimmers of us all.

b. As for China itself, we are informed that curious discrepancies in the Chinese press, in the sort of items broadcast by the Chinese and monitored by [redacted] foreshadowed the current internal upheaval in China months before events drew our attention to it. Perhaps greater selectivity would have passed over these indications, perhaps not; at any rate turning analysts into skimmers produced the same result as if the indications had not been published. When we get down to discussing the meaning of this upheaval, our preoccupation with current events can only bolster the view that, since Communists and their governments are pretty much alike, this must be a Communist phenomenon to which some past power struggle in Russia probably offers a reliable basis for judgment. The extent to which it must also be a peculiarly Chinese phenomenon gets lost in the welter of headlines and daily bulletins.

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TOP SECRET

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c. Our preoccupation with great quantities of information about current events, at the expense of deeper study of what causes the events to take place, is illustrated by our work on Indonesia. On 1 July 1965 the U.S. intelligence community ratified without reservation the view that:

"The principal development in Indonesia over the past year has been the sharply accelerated growth of the Communist Party (PKI) role in government. This trend is likely to continue as long as Sukarno is in control. Opponents of this trend are discouraged and intimidated; even the military has all but lost the will to resist."*

On 10 September a special supplementary estimate added that:

"Sukarno is the unchallenged leader of Indonesia and will almost certainly remain so until death or infirmity removes him from the scene.... Communist fortunes in Indonesia will probably continue to prosper so long as Sukarno stays in power.... If Sukarno lives, it is probable that in two or three years the Indonesian state will be sufficiently controlled by the Communists to be termed a Communist state, even though Sukarno remains the acknowledged leader. It will probably not be possible, however, to detect any precise moment at which the Communists 'take over,' unless Sukarno chooses to proclaim it.... Conceivably, the PKI leaders could become powerful enough to threaten Sukarno's own dominance, but since his policies are likely to remain along lines generally favorable to them, they are unlikely to take risks in order to seize power."**

These unusually confident judgments were based on an enormous accumulation of surface facts which even in hindsight appear to have been accurate; they were made by experts on Indonesia whose qualifications cannot be impugned, and concurred in quickly by the

* NIE 54/55-65, "Prospects for Indonesia and Malaysia."

** NIE 55-65, "Prospects for and Strategic Implications of a Communist Takeover in Indonesia."

TOP SECRET

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Board of National Estimates and USIB. Yet when the Communist roof caved in three weeks later, events uncovered counterforces so vast and violent that their nature ought to have been suspected. The massacre of hundreds of thousands of Communists must have had a motivation, a basis in a peculiarly Indonesian mixture of politics and economics and religion and social institutions, which our preoccupation with surface facts and current events kept us from even imagining.

d. So with our approach to the Communist threat throughout the underdeveloped world. Each group of experts is so busy keeping up with quantities of current information on its own field that there is no time for deeper study and comparison. When we consider the Communist threat to, say, black Africa we can only bring together experts on Africa, experts on international Communism, and experts on Russia and China, none of whom can be deeply enough versed in the fields of the others, and add up their anxieties instead of discriminating among them. When we do this in turn to each potential Communist threat around the world, we end up with a worst-case view of total Communist capabilities which is greatly at variance with observable developments over the past ten years.

e. For lack of deeper study we deceive ourselves by applying the narrowly economic concept of "underdeveloped countries" to forms of society which have been highly developed for centuries, but along lines too alien to our own for us to understand. We therefore apply much the same standards of intelligence interest to most "underdeveloped countries" as if they were all pretty much alike, at least in their susceptibility to the attractions of Communism; as if where the Communists try hardest they are most certain to succeed. This neglects the emotional impact of concepts like colonialism, nationalism, various forms of xenophobia, racial and tribal animosities, and the search for a national identity; some of these concepts we ignore as empty slogans in the Cold War, and some we fail to see as obstacles to any foreign ideology. In particular this approach neglects the social force of ancient religions. We usually mention in passing the impact of Islam or Buddhism, which varies widely from country to country, as no doubt interesting but not crucial. We are alarmed by the intense effort the Communists have been putting for years into subverting the Muslim world, but we never seem to ask ourselves why they have so little to show for it.

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And for a long time we treated the Buddhist leaders of South Vietnam as merely a set of particularly devious politicians. Yet when Muslims run amok in Java and Hindus in Bali, and Buddhist monks and nuns immolate themselves in South Vietnam, these oriental religions must have more political and social force than our Cold-War simplifications take into account. The history and nature of religion in China might help explain why China is now Communist and southern Asia is not--just as in Russia the Communists subverted to their own purposes the xenophobia, messianic zeal, and autocracy inculcated for centuries by Russian Orthodoxy, but have had no such advantage elsewhere in Europe.* At any rate our black-and-white simplicities have been much too simple.

f. A more specific example of damaging superficiality concerns one aspect of the Vietnamese War. Faced month after month with a lack of hard information from the scene, our experts had to develop alternative bases for judgment, and these came inevitably to include more and more statistics and extrapolations, unreliable as these were known to be. One consequence was that our estimate of the daily logistic requirements of the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong was extrapolated from American logistic requirements with adjustments according to various untestable assumptions. A U.S. Army study of some captured documents suggested that both the CIA and the DIA figures might be much too high. Then it developed that some 7,000 captured documents, of which a spot check showed that 6,000 bore on this problem, had been gradually accumulating in our files for more than a year without being exploited for this important purpose. So far have our work load and work habits, reinforcing each other, led us away from using what the collectors are in business to collect.

g. Meanwhile, in our effort to treat intelligence and policy as two quite separate entities, we pay too little attention to the way in which our own intelligence views affect the events themselves: the question, for example, whether American policy based on our view of the Communist threat does not increase the appeal of Communism and thereby intensify the threat. In the cases of

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Indonesia and Ghana we were fortunate, because the peoples rose up and checked the threat for reasons of their own, not ours. But what about Cuba? Did American policy, based on a worst-case view expressed repeatedly by the intelligence community from 1959 on, cause Castro, with little effective help from Cuban Communists or even (until later) from the Soviet Union, to convert Cuba to a communist state?

27. To some readers these observations will seem remote from the subject of collection requirements, but we believe that they are closely connected. What we characterize here as superficialities are an amalgam of preconceptions, simplifications, and work load which are dominated by the belief that we must try to cover the whole world. The Long Range Plan does not question its own explicit assumption that the "security interests of the United States have expanded to include virtually every inhabited spot on earth." The whole range of our stated requirements from the PNIOs down to the most trivial item has justified such an assumption and made our superficiality inevitable. But it is absolutely essential that we do question it from now on. In the meantime we must recognize that we do not understand the Asians and Africans and Latin Americans; so long as our study is given largely to the surface events of the moment, understanding them will be an unduly long, slow, expensive process. This is an urgent reason for bringing the Information Explosion under control and freeing time for deeper study of fewer subjects.

28. None of this highly negative recital should be read as ridiculing our spectacular technical achievements, or denying that they have provided crucial answers to some crucial questions, or arguing that we do not need better information. But it does point to the necessity for the most earnest consideration of the following propositions:

a. We are already collecting far more information than we can satisfactorily use. What makes this alarming is not the quantity of photographic film that receives only superficial scanning or of SIGINT tapes that are not exploited at all; this kind of waste might be tolerable, even unavoidable, if only we could be confident that what we do use we use to the best of our collectively great abilities. The real cause for concern is the danger to the quality of our finished intelligence.

b. It is not the proper function of this Agency to know everything about everything, even about all locally important developments in politics, economics, military affairs, and technology

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around the world. The same problem which faces us in converting mountains of data into finished intelligence also faces the Executive Branch in putting our finished intelligence to proper use--time to study it, competition from other claims to attention, varied habits of thought and work. But a further inhibition operates against full use of our finished intelligence however perfectly we analyze and interpret the data. We devote much attention to problems on which the Executive Branch knows it is either unable or unwilling to take action. Both Secretary McNamara and Secretary Rusk, the former with particularly persuasive force, have recently emphasized that the U.S. cannot reform and police the whole world; this means to us that much of our intelligence might as well not have been produced for any practical difference it made. Yet we tell ourselves to act as if every collectible scrap of information and finished intelligence on all foreign developments were essential to the national interest. This is to multiply the Pearl Harbor syndrome by the jigsaw theory (that little scrap might be the missing piece) and get mediocrity. It will take changing a great many attitudes inside the intelligence community to bring it about, but we would like to hope for a time when we can be more sure of ourselves, and right, about a few important matters of which Indonesia is one example, and less anxious about beating the newspapers to one more coup in Syria or some other non-country.

c. As the only alternative to indefinite expansion, the Long Range Plan says that "if the Government reaches a conscious decision that the Agency should not expand to the degree that we propose, then it must relieve the Agency of some of these responsibilities." The implication that everything we do is the result of some specific responsibility laid on us by higher authority is dubious. We would argue rather that the size and multiplicity of our work are to a considerable degree a result of our own interpretation of broad and vague guidelines, and that much of what we consider our specific responsibilities is either self-imposed or responsive to no higher authority than the management of the intelligence community itself--the U.S. Intelligence Board. Witness the PNIOs, which originally were to receive executive scrutiny by the National Security Council but did not to any effective degree, and long ago came to represent the community talking to itself. In this way traditions arising out of our own past reactions to events take on the deceptive appearance of fundamental imperatives.

d. Thus one of our most important functions is educating the policy-makers to ask the right questions and to know what useful

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answers they can rightfully expect from intelligence. Not that our judgment of what is important is superior to theirs, but that it is an important ingredient of their own capacity to make judgments, and that our view of what it is practical for us to do to help them is better based in operational and analytical experience.

e. It follows that it is up to us to redefine our own jobs. Keenly aware that the community and CIA have habituated the Executive Branch to certain high expectations, and that it would take diplomatic skill and assiduity of a high order to revise them, we nevertheless believe that the effort is worth making. Its first aim would be to educate the policy-makers to an understanding that we would serve their own interest better if we could concentrate our effort on the crucial problems rather than try to cover the whole world comprehensively--and superficially--in the way that has been assumed to be essential ever since the Bogotazo of 1948. There could be two improvements: better judgments, and less competition of secondary matters for attention. Its second aim would be to educate management within the intelligence community to the necessity for concentrating on the fundamentals and letting the incidentals go. Without such education no possible combination of regulations, USIB resolutions, systems analyses, and deliberations of boards, panels, and committees will bring the Information Explosion under adequate control.

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